

ON PAGE 1-4

WASHINGTON TIMES
22 January 1986

Quick Soviet denial of spy report heightens Britain's fear for bases

STAT

By Peter Almond
THE WASHINGTON TIMES FOREIGN SERVICE

LONDON — The Soviet Union, with uncharacteristic speed and vehemence, has hotly denied a report in the authoritative Jane's Defence Weekly that its spies have been operating among the women protesting storage of Cruise missiles outside Greenham Common.

"This is a malicious and disgusting invention which we categorically refute," said Soviet Embassy press attache Gennadi Shabannikov in a TV interview. But he declined to deny the presence of "spetsnaz" — Soviet special commando forces — in Britain.

The quick Soviet response surprised Defense Ministry officials and other analysts, who suggested that it may have hit uncomfortably close to the truth. One military analyst proffered one of Shakespeare's famous lines: "Me thinks he doth protest too much."

The women protesting at Greenham yesterday dismissed the report as sheer fantasy. But Jane's editors stood by their story.

The report is based on interviews with Yossef Bodansky, a consultant on Soviet affairs to the U.S. Pentagon and State Department, who was reported to have talked to a number of Soviet defectors after debriefings by U.S. intelligence officials.

Geoffrey Manners, the weekly magazine's news editor, said Mr. Bodansky's information was double-checked with British intelligence officials before it was used.

Last September the British government showed how seriously it takes any threat to its bases by holding Exercise Brave Defender. Carried out by approximately 130,000 troops, Brave Defender was the biggest military maneuver in mainland Britain since World War II.

The operation involved Britain's Territorial Army, a force similar to that of the U.S. National Guard, and was aimed specifically at repelling commando attacks.

The Soviet's special commando forces are estimated to number at least 30,000 and are believed to include athletes of Olympic caliber who reconnoiter future targets during their trips abroad. Among their missions is the targeting and de-

struction of NATO command centers and air bases.

The Jane's report claimed that three to six Soviet-trained agents from Warsaw Pact and Western European countries — including Britain — have been present with the Greenham women at all times since the arrival of Tomahawk Cruise missiles in December 1983.

The report in Jane's said the female agents were trained in camps in the Carpathian, Ural and Volga military districts, which include mock-ups of the Greenham Common base. There has been a large rotation of agents into and out of the "peace camps," in order to give more of them field experience, the report said.

The Soviet agents are reported to be under the command of the GRU, the intelligence directorate of the Soviet General Staff, which also directs the spetsnaz forces. Their

initial mission, said Jane's, was to incite protesters in order to test base defenses, but they are now trained to attack the base in pre-emptive strikes and to act as beacons for other attacking Soviet agents or airborne troops.

There have been several reported break-ins at the base, and women protesting at Greenham claim to have gotten through to the closely guarded missile bunkers. Military officials deny this, although as a matter of policy they refuse to comment on security.